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American Diplomacy Under Tyler and Polk. By Jesse S. Reeves, Ph. D. [The Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History, 1906.] (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1907. Pp. ii, 335.)

Besides the lectures indicated by the title of this volume, it has two chapters which contain matter not included in the lectures. One of the two deals mainly with Commander Mackenzie's report on his visit to Santa Anna at Havana in July, 1846; and the other is a reprint of an article by the author of the book on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo from the *American Historical Review* for January, 1905.

Dr. Reeves has given a clear and rational survey of his subject in pleasing contrast with the mass of controversial literature passing for history which has been written in relation to it. It is plain that he has striven to maintain the judicial attitude throughout; but there is some question as to whether he has not been too confident of his conclusions as to Polk's motives, and whether he has not in fact occasionally misinterpreted the evidence or forced his inferences. He does not accept the partisan contemporary view—too common still—that Polk made himself the wicked agent of the slave-holding interest to extend the area of slavery. To him, Polk is simply the intriguing and unscrupulous expansionist, who deliberately planned and accomplished the seizure of California at the cost of an unnecessary and bloody war against a power that was too weak to make effectual resistance.

In the preparation of the book, the larger part of the sources available in the United State has been used, including the manuscript materials in the archives of the Department of State at Washington, the Library of Congress, the Lenox Library, and that of the Chicago Historical Society, and especially the indispensable diary of Polk, but only that small fraction of the correspondence of the Republic of Texas with its own *chargés* at Washington which has already found its way into print. Nothing has been drawn from the documents in the English and French archives.

More than half the book is taken up with the annexation of Texas and the Mexican war. The author describes it as dealing "principally with the questions of boundary," and remarks that

the southwestern boundary question was settled "by conquest." This is misleading. It puts forward the boundary question as the most important subject of the diplomatic correspondence of the period concerning the southwestern relations of the United States, and as the cause of the Mexican war. Dr. Reeves must know himself how relatively little this question figures in the correspondence. He admits (pp. 287, 288, 297, 298) that it was not the Mexican attack on Thornton's dragoons after Taylor had advanced to the Rio Grande that brought Polk to his determination in favor of war; for the message recommending the declaration was written and ready to send to Congress before the report of the attack reached Washington, and the news simply permitted the revision of the argument of the message. Of course the question remains as to whether Congress would have made the declaration if the attack had not occurred, but there seems good reason to believe that it would have done so. Dr. Reeves, however, thinks that Polk entered upon the presidency with the determination so to use the unsettled question of the boundary of Texas as to tak California; and that, although this was not mentioned in the message, it was the real reason for recommending a declaration of war. With this the reviewer can not agree. Polk's declaration to Bancroft made public by Schouler is by no means to be construed as a statement of intention to acquire California without regard to Mexican rights. How groundless is the assumption of such a purpose on Polk's part is clearly to be seen from the letters of Slidell to Buchanan, November 30, 1845, and Buchanan to Slidell of December 17, 1845. These contain sufficiency that Polk was willing to accept an adjustment which should leave California out altogether.

Neither will all readers be convinced that the condemnation of Polk for his negotiations with Santa Anna immediately before the outbreak of the war and during its earlier stages is just. Considering the state of the relations of the United States with Mexico—the withdrawal of the Mexican minister from Washington; the warlike declarations of the Mexican government; the failure of the Slidell mission; and the fact that the claims against Mexico, of which a considerable part had been sanctioned by arbitration, must be enforced by war if at all—Polk can scarcely

be blamed for meeting the unreasonable bluster of the Mexicans with a plan to settle all differences peaceably by restoring Santa Anna. The question, however, is one that concerns the ethical standard rather than the historical facts, and it can not be further discussed here.

The treatment of the northeastern and northwestern boundary questions, which are the essential questions of the diplomacy relative to those quarters, is careful and scholarly; but something might have been gained by extending the *résumé* of the northeastern boundary controversy back to the Proclamation of 1763 and bringing out the historical continuity of the description.

One or two errors of fact are to be noted: the names of the Magaguadavic and Schoodiac are exchanged in the statement of the respective claims of Great Britain and the United States (p. 4, note 4), and A. J. Donelson was not the son-in-law but the nephew of Andrew Jackson (p. 178). The style of the narrative is nervous and rather impressive; but there are occasional evidences of too cursory proof reading and hasty composition, such as the superfluous "to" in the last line but one on p. 220, putting "1848" for 1846 (p. 188), and the incomplete description of the division line for Oregon proposed by Pakenham in 1844 (p. 247). "Elliott" (p. 147 and elsewhere) should be Elliot.

In spite of Dr. Reeves's assumption on altogether insufficient evidence that the key of Polk's southwestern diplomacy lies in his determination to take California from Mexico by foul means if fair should prove inadequate, this work marks a distinct step in advance in its abandonment of the effort to explain the negotiations of Polk with Mexico—and indeed the whole southwestward expansion movement—as inspired by the interests of the slaveholders. Its author having gone thus far will surely, if he continues at his subject, go still further by and by and will accord Polk the justice that most of the historians have heretofore denied him.